



Austin Office
4407 Monterey Oaks Blvd., Building 1, Ste. 110
Austin, Texas 78749
Tel 512.476.0891 Fax 512.476.0893
www.swca.com

23 December 2003

Ms. Kay Hindes,
Planner II, Staff Archaeologist
Department of Planning
Historic Preservation and Design Division
City of San Antonio
1901 S. Alamo Street
San Antonio, TX 78283-3966

Re: Champion Park Subdivision (Loop 1604 and Cagnon Road) Archaeological Background Review and Field Reconnaissance

Dear Ms. Hindes:

This letter constitutes our report on our archaeological inspection of a portion of the proposed Champion Park Subdivision project area in southwestern San Antonio. Our investigations were conducted on behalf of Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc. and Integrated Asset Management Realty Group in response to a request from the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation Office (HPO), under the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Urban Design Ordinance #80910. The HPO was concerned that the proposed development could potentially impact sites associated with a cemetery noted near the project boundaries on the Culebra Hill 7.5-minute U.S.G.S. topographic quadrangle. The HPO requested that a professional archaeologist inspect the northern portion of the 202-acre development area to determine if any historic sites, buildings, or landscape features are located within the project area. In addition, Padrone Hill, a natural landscape feature, is located northwest of the Champion Park project boundaries. This hill has been used for centuries by prehistoric and historic area inhabitants, and the vicinity around the hill has a high potential to contain archaeological sites.

The proposed Champion Park subdivision would be constructed northwest of the intersection of Loop 1604 and US 90 in Bexar County, Texas. The project area covers a 210-acre, rectangular parcel of undeveloped land adjacent to Cagnon Road, which runs roughly parallel to the western edge of Loop 1604. Soil within the project area includes Houston Black gravelly clay and Brackett Clay loam over limestone bedrock (Taylor et al. 1991), and vegetation mainly comprises sparse scrub grasses with occasional prickly pear and mesquite.

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The background review revealed that the project area has not been previously surveyed, and no recorded archaeological sites are within or near the project boundaries. Portions of nearby Loop 1604 were surveyed by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (now TxDOT) in 1991, but no other cultural resource surveys have been performed within the project vicinity. The closest site to the project area is 41BX774, located approximately 0.8 miles south of the southern property boundary. This site, northwest of the intersection of Cagnon Road and US 90, was recorded in 1987 by archaeologists from the Southern Texas Archaeological Association (STAA). The site is an Early to Late Archaic lithic procurement area comprising chert nodules and cobbles, cores, initial stage bifaces, and debitage (TARL, 41BX774 site form). Since the site was recorded on private property and would not be impacted, no additional work was recommended at the time it was recorded.

The history of Padrone Hill has been researched several times over the past few decades. Most recently, it has been noted that the area was used by Jose Ignacio Perez, a leading rancher of early San Antonio, for grazing sheep. The Perez family arrived in Central Texas in the 1730s as members of the Canary Islands emigrant group. By 1790, Juan Ignacio Perez, Jose's father, had amassed over 16,000 acres (e.g., McGraw and Hinds 1987). Though the main Rancho de Perez was located south of San Antonio, Jose Ignacio had thousands of cattle and sheep, which he farmed on parcels of land he owned or rented throughout the San Antonio area. One of these parcels was Padrone Hill (Hinds, personal communication).

SWCA's investigations of the Champion Park property included a pedestrian inspection of the northern limits of the proposed development on December 19, 2003. A survey of the entire project area was not conducted. The northern one-quarter of the project area was carefully examined; no shovel tests were excavated due to the nature of the soils and lack of obvious historic cultural activity.

The northern one-quarter of the property included undeveloped pasture land with barbed wire property fences along the western, northern, and eastern boundaries. Several drainages crossed through the area, and one large cattle pond had been excavated in the northwestern quadrant of the property. All of the drainages and the pond were dry during the pedestrian evaluation.

In general, the property has never been developed. The only cultural element within the project boundaries was a group of agricultural features located in the center of the northern portion of the project area. As first noted on the U.S.G.S. topographic quadrangle, a metal windmill was found within the project area, as well as an adjacent wood water tank and a cement

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slab. The windmill was manufactured of galvanized iron with a three-legged lattice support; a patent date of August 1915 was embossed on the metal frame. The windmill is currently laying on its side, with the blades flat against the ground. Additional blades were found north of the main frame, but it is unlikely that these blades were ever used. Just to the north of the windmill is a wooden water tank. The tank was originally supported by four cut beams, but one of the beams was later replaced with a railroad tie. The barrel of the tank is formed of vertical plank boards held together with galvanized and ungalvanized wire nails and three iron tie bands, and it is covered with an ungalvanized pressed iron roof. A circular hole in the top allowed for water to naturally refill the tank. West of this tank, the archaeologists noted a 5-x-7-foot cement slab. The slab was made with very coarse temper, including whole stones (>2 inches in diameter) and abundant gravels. Years of neglect and vegetation growth have caused the slab to dislodge from its original setting, and it now lies approximately 20 degrees off of the ground, supported by large mesquite trunks.

Based on the physical remains, it is believed that these ranching features were built sometime between 1930 and 1950. Their significantly dilapidated appearance, as noted during the current field visit, indicates that they have not been used in decades. No other artifacts were noted on the surface, and it is believed that these features were used in cattle grazing. They do not represent nearby domestic occupation.

Ranching tools such as these are extremely common throughout Central Texas, especially in the San Antonio area where cattle grazing and other husbandry activities were one of the largest segments of local economics throughout the twentieth century. The farming features found within the Champion Park property have extremely poor integrity and no associated archaeological remains. No additional cultural resource work is recommended in this area.

The cemetery that appears on the U.S.G.S. topographic map is located approximately 0.4 miles west of the western boundary of the project area. No evidence of any historic features or buildings, such as a homestead, that may be associated with the cemetery were found during this survey. Similarly, the base of Padrone Hill is approximately 0.5 miles northwest of the northern boundary of the proposed Champion Park development area. Although the hill is a known natural landmark with associated prehistoric and historic activity, no archaeological sites or historic buildings associated with Padrone Hill were noted within the project boundaries.

Although SWCA did not survey the entire project area, the setting is not conducive to the preservation of buried cultural resources. It is unlikely that significant archaeological sites are



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located on the property. Therefore, SWCA recommends to the HPO that the project be allowed to proceed as planned.

If you have any comments or concerns on this review or our ensuing recommendations, please feel free to contact me or Brett Houk at 512-476-0891.

Sincerely,



for

Kerri S. Barile
Principal Investigator

Cc: Mr. Rick Gray
Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc.

References

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- McGraw, A. J., and K. Hindes
1987 *Chipped Stone and Adobe: A Survey of Cultural Resources Within Portions of the Proposed Applewhite Reservoir, Southwestern Bexar County, Texas.* Archaeological Survey Report, No. 105. The Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Taylor, F. B., R. B. Hailey, and D. L. Richmond
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